



Catcher in the Rye

Daniel C. Metz

It was my first film. I guess, living in a post -“Brokeback Mountain” world, cinema can get a little too “meta.” This is a potential criticism of my first feature, which I wittily titled, “Love Flies Out the Door When Money Comes Innuendo.” I think, though, that maybe I should relay a story of how I was confronted, and simultaneously dealt, with such a criticism.

The picture premiered in New York City to a crowd of

newspapermen and cineastes. After the screening, once the uncontrollable laughter died down, I was introduced by the theatre's programming manager. "Ladies and Gentlemen," she said, "it is now our distinct honor to present the writer, director, and star of this film, Daniel C. Metz. He will field any questions you may have."

I made my way up to the podium and thanked the young lady, quite graciously, for inviting me to show my film. The programming manager, incidentally, was quite a looker.

A younger man raised his hand and I looked at him. "You sir, in the cardigan sweater."

"First I'd like to thank you for coming and showing us your film."

"Oh, please, it was nothing. Actually, I made a deal with that ravishing curator; I told her I would come if she promised me free admission." The crowd chuckled at this joke as if I was some great stand-up comedian like Bill Cosby or Billy Crystal.

"I was wondering, actually," the young man

continued, "would you be willing to tell us of some of your influences in making this picture?" The crowd laughed at this, too, which you probably wouldn't understand but if you continue reading you will. Either way, it made me jealous that he was getting the laughs instead of me, so I tried to think of something witty.

"Yes, sure. I would say Mozart, Aristotle, and, um, Isaac Newton." The crowd was in stitches.

"Perhaps I should have been more specific; would you tell us your *cinematic* influences?" I am not entirely sure what italics would sound like, but it is the closest notation I can provide for the tonal change in his question.

"Ah, yes. Did you ever see that movie, um, where Michael J. Fox turns into a werewolf?"

A stranger in the crowd screamed out, "Teen Wolf."

"Yeah," I said, "Teen Wolf."

Let me explain to you, briefly, that it is way cool to be esoteric. I was being esoteric, and also aloof. If I avoid all of their questions, they will think I am really deep.

I learned this technique from Bob Dylan. Actually, I've never met Bob Dylan, but I read about Bob Dylan doing it in a *New Yorker* book review of the collected interviews of Bob Dylan; the principle remains the same nevertheless.

"Does anyone else have a question?" I saw an older man, so I pointed him out and said, "you there, in the cardigan sweater."

"I have a longer question. I couldn't help but noticing that every joke in your film was actually ripped off from other films." There was a gasp at this.

"I'm sorry sir, I don't follow." At this, I removed my fake moustache and glasses.

"Well, if you insist I will point out a handful, but actually I could place every gag in your film. The opening, where you appear to be vomiting over the side of a cruise ship but are revealed to be fishing, is from Chaplin's "The Immigrant." The mayhem when you sneak into America without a passport was taken from both "Monkey Business" and "A Night at the Opera,"

both by the Marx Brothers. Once you were there, and you got ready to go out on the town, the preparation sequence was taken step by step from Woody Allen in "Bananas." The broken heel device you used to set yourself up with the lead actress, as well as all of the supporting dialogue, was from Preston Sturges' "The Lady Eve." When her jewelry is stolen, again you stole lines from the Marx Brothers, this time from "Animal Crackers" when Captain Spalding pretends to be capable but unmotivated to look for the stolen paintings. Further, your fantasy of being a detective and discovering the stolen jewelry was taken directly from Buster Keaton in "Sherlock Jr."

"I see." I responded, a bit shaken.

"My question, I guess, is whether you are capable of making up your own jokes at all?"

"Of course I am. Here, I'll make one up now. Knock Knock."

"Who's there?" the crowd, in unison, echoed toward me. They were really good sports, all said.

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“Boo,” I retorted with the brevity and levity of a true genius.

Almost as if they were reading my mind, they fell perfectly into the trap I had set for them when they spoke, “Boo Who?”

“Why are you crying,” I spoke concisely, with the guidance of Dionysus, “it’s only a joke.”

